Letter no. 26. 23 March.

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Middle East Forces.

My own dearest darling Barbara – I have had your 25th & 26th letters today. The latter enclosed the Dec bank statement & the end of your letter is largely about money. My darling, it is enervating, heartrending that there should be this misunderstanding, & that you should have been made to feel so unhappy about it, & after you have been so careful & so wonderfully thrifty. I feel very much to blame for not having anticipated that this might happen, & I should have written you each time I drew anything, so that you you would hear from me before the bank statement arrived. As soon as I arrived in Cairo, I put in the first £30 – & I made a pretty big hole in that, by all the things I bought & all my going about. And then when the time came to pay the Hotel bill, Frank's & (Sgt) money had not arrived, so I had to pay for all three. The only way I could do this was to persuade the Hotel to accept a cheque dated Dec 1st, & I promptly had to pay another £30 in to Barclays. And then, when I left Egypt to come to Palestine, I thought I would take no chances & paid another £20 in. And now, on March 23rd, I have £28 in the Bank, £5 in my pocket, & I do not owe a penny to any body. I really & truly have not been extravagant, darling – Quite the opposite – & I am furious to think that you should have felt so disappointed in me, as you must have done. As for the Continental in Cairo, bed & breakfast was 8/–, special terms for officers, which

I thought was very reasonable. In this place, there was no room in barracks for the first three days, for the officers - we stayed at Quito an ordinary hotel, they charged 10/- bed & breakfast. This whole Middle East, or Egypt & Palestine anyway, are revoltingly expensive. They just seem to be out to make as much money as they can while the going is good. I can promise you, darling, that I do not subscribe. I do hope my cable has reassured you, that my last letter explaining things arrives before too long. During all my time in Egypt, apart from the Cairo leave, I felt the I.D. which is 25 miles from anywhere, twice. On then I went into Ismailia with Frank & one or two people, & we had dinner & a few drinks & came back. I have been in Palestine 2½ months, & have hardly been out at all. I have certainly not had a night out or a binge, & I do not expect, or indeed or want to have one. I just cannot & do not enjoy these so called gay spots, & on the rare occasions when I have gone out, I have just been intensely bored, rather annoyed with myself for not being in my room, writing to you, or reading, & overwhelmingly anxious to get away & get to bed as soon as possible. But I'm sure, by the time you receive this letter all will be understood again - & also the bank balance will be looking very much better. I expect the B.C.W.D. cheque was just late in reaching the bank: I don't really think for a moment they will stop paying me - that would be too mean for words, after the way I have worked for them. Unless,

of course. They began to do very badly, & just had to economise somewhere. Even then I do not believe they would stop it altogether. Peter & Jack have sons in the Army - & some of the directors too - so that should act as a certain deterrent to them. And one other thing - £1 a month is taken off army pay, at the source, for Income Tax. I was under the impression that civil pay too, was to be taxed at source. Whatever happens, the Insurances must go on - & your mas money too, of course. Please Sweetheart, do not worry again. I am economising, very much, & definitely shall not draw out any more money before the beginning of June. I am terribly anxious too, that when the war is over, we have some money, & quite a lot I hope, to start a new house, & really be able to decorate it & furnish it as we want it to be, & not, as always before, as our finances have allowed it to be. And if the firm do stop or cut down my money, I will promise you to spend less. Whatever happens, we must have enough to make a really good start again. I do wish my majority would come through - that would be good news to cable to you. And as long as it lasted, we could be saving money fast. If only that would come, & I got out of this barracks, to some place where field allowance was payable, & at a major's rate, 1/6 per day extra, I would be able to live on my allowances, & not touch pay at all. And there is a thing called command pay, which there is a chance of my being paid, in which case, I would even be able to make a profit on allowances. But there are

all ifs & buts, all of which would be v. pleasant. But whatever happens, as I gave you in my last letter - as far as pay is concerned, I shall not spend more than £3-15-0 per week - probably more like £3-0-0. So that, after the end of May, beginning of June, you can reckon on me taking out of the bank £12-15- per month. And I will do my very best to make it less than that.

I have now given up whisky. This is not strictly a saving, because the beer is rather more expensive. But it seemed to me that whereas 2-3 each evening was not really too much, it might become too much of a habit, & also might begin to increase. So I have just stopped it - & found this perfectly simple to do, so that is alright. In any case, you never liked me to smell of whisky, did you darling? As to potency, my pet, which you mentioned in a previous letter - well, actions speak louder than words, so wait until I come home, my lovely darling, & you shall be the judge. In any case, you did say in your letter, that you did not fear for me - so thankyou darling.

I am also giving very hard again, to cut down cigarettes, & stick to a pipe again - or rather, for the first time. I only attempted my pipe once on the ship, when I think the tobacco I borrowed must have been bad stuff, because I never tried again, & just decided that I did not like a pipe. But, this time, I have got hold of some tobacco I like, & really feel that this time I may succeed. I smoked only three cigarettes

Yesterday - & five today. But I have been smoking 20 a day for 16 years now, so the habit, which is all it is, is going to take a little breaking.

I went to a concert, on Wednesday, of the Palestine Symphony Orchestra. It was lovely, & I enjoyed it tremendously. The Orchestra was really wonderful, & of course, once again, Palestine has gained from the exodus from Germany: & the countries which the Nazis have absorbed & trampled over. The conductor was a man called Singer, who impressed me at times, but not at others. It seemed to rather depend on what was being played, which struck me as being wrong. Surely the conductor has sufficient say in the making up of the programme, not to have things he is not interested in. Their first thing was King Lear, by Berlioz - which meant nothing to me at all, the conductor orchestra (not wandered through it in kaleidoscopical (how do you spell that word?) sort of way, & seemed quite glad when it was over. Then we had the soloist - girl of 15, Ella Goldstein, at the piano, with the orchestra, of course. This was a thing of Rubinstein's, something to do with D. It was lovely. The girl was marvellous, & a beautiful pianist, but not in the same class as the few famous men I have heard - Horowitz - Schnabel, Rachmaninoff - Rachmann. She played with intense feeling, but seemed to lack technique & finesse, compared with these other people. I suppose it is impossible to be first class at that age, on the piano. She had a very ugly style, too - which I thought was a pity, because

she ~~thought~~ was a pretty girl, nicely dressed too. But she stooped, crawled over the piano, terribly - when she walked off, which she had to do many times, for calls, she was actually round shouldered almost to the point of being hump backed. The next thing was called "Fireworks" - by Stravinsky - which was very quick, very short, very clever - rather beyond me. But everybody, including the Singer - the Orchestra, seemed to enjoy it. Then, finally, there was something else in "D" - this time by Schumann, which was very lovely & beautifully played. I went with Ben. Aye, it was the last concert of the season - but the new season commences very soon - April 9th, I think - & I certainly intend to go & come more. The seats we went in cost 4/-. I'm sure you want mind me spending money in such ways.

The first of your two letters was written on January 28th. Sweetest darling, I knew you would be very unhappy, miserable & desperate on that day. I longed to be with you - I must have told you so in my letter. We could & would have comforted each other so much - if only by lying in a chair or on a bed, holding each other, & just allowing ourselves to cry, talking about the little darling. But I do not want to say a lot about our darling Lisa, now. The new baby should be here, when you receive this, & I must not make you unhappy. But, whatever happens, we must never reach a stage, & I know we never will, when we cannot talk to each other, & write

to eachother about Lisa. I keep hoping I shall have some more snaps from you, of her. Perhaps one or two of Kathleen's enlargements — or even some of the baby snaps. That one of you & her on the verandah at Blair Lennan is so sweet. I used to have it in my wallet, do you remember?, but I lost it somehow. I also keep hoping you will send me another photo — or more snaps of you — I asked you to in one of my letters. Also some of your scent.

I have had the following letters from you, now:-

no. ~~13~~ 14	- 25 Jan
5	- 2 Feb.
21	- 15 Feb.
???	- 3 Mar
23	- 6 Mar
22	- 15 Mar
25 } 26 }	- 17 Mar.
	- 23 Mar.

So you see, they have come in a funny order, there are 18 letters still missing. The one marked ??? had no number on it, but it was written in between 22 & 23, so I have called it 22½. Isn't it disgusting that these other letters do not come to me? They must be so interesting, they would surely be so to me — they represent so much of your time & effort — your sweet thoughts for me. Your letters are simply wonderful, my darling, the things you say to me are thrilling & wonderfully comforting & exciting. Your love for me now, darling, seems so deep & real & permanent — I don't think I ever expected you to love me quite so much. When I was writing to you before, your letters began to reach me, I tried very hard to tell you how much I loved you — & even felt a little afraid that you would not want to be loved so much & so intensely & so much to the exclusion of everything & everybody else. And now you

have made me feel that it is alright to love you as much as that, more if I want to, & you will return my love, & what is as much, you want me to love you as much as I possibly can. Oh darling, I do not know if I can love you more - I love & adore you so much now - but I will try. It is going to be a thrilling & wonderful experience, meeting each other again. Can you imagine it, my own darling? Seeing what we look like to eachother - you will be lovely & perfect, as you always are. And we shall have so much to say to eachother, no matter how much we write to eachother. And there will be the baby for me to see - & I hope & hope, still a very young baby. And then there will be kisses & love making - oh my sweetheart darling - I shall not know how to begin; & I shall not know how to stop. I think very often of when & where & how we shall meet again. You must not think in terms of years, my darling. That is too long, I could not bear it. I feel sure that all this manoeuvring & jockeying for position, & diplomacy, & war of nerves & talk & propaganda will fail, & fail, & talks & messages - that this cannot go on for very much longer, that soon now, everything will start, & that this time it will go on relentlessly to its end, & it will not take long. Autumn or winter this year. And then I must get myself home quickly, or else you & the baby must come out here or wherever I am. This is not a life, being separated from eachother.

And it is one excellent reason why this war must be brought to an end. I read the paper every day, with that one thought uppermost in my mind — what is happening, how will speed up our victory, so that I can be with my Barbara again & see my baby for the first time.

I suppose it will have to be Norks, when I come home. Else has to live. That is the obvious way of doing it — things will be difficult when it is all over. It would be foolish, I suppose, to start into something new, & all the work & struggle it would entail, when I can walk back into my own job. It has its attractions, in many ways — a staff & workpeople who seemed to appreciate me — good customers, too. As for the inevitable millstone — I suppose he may have passed on or passed somewhere by then. Or else they will have found him out — or Peter, or whoever it is, will listen to reason. In any case, I don't think I shall worry so much again — just fold him on one side & forget about him. As you say, salary is, perhaps, not so important, so long as we have enough to live on, pleasantly — I can afford to have a maid, so as you don't have to do housework! — we can have some more children, enough clothes — money to go about enough, see some flicks & theatres, buy some books. That is the way — & live in a pleasant part — we can get along peacefully & happily — the rest will come in time. And I have already learned too that I will never work as hard again. We shall have much more time together, darling. We shall know so much better how to be happy together.

But to be together again – that is the thing, my darling. I, too, feel like a stone on the ground. I have the work. It does take up my time, from time to time. I do a certain degree of achievement. But what is it? Instilling discipline the fighting spirit into 200 Jews – seeing their load is good, their drill is good – all so as they can do their bit in the war machine. Telling off young officers, & drawing off new officers – all for the same purpose. It keeps my brain going in a sort of a way, & it makes me more aggressive, more bossy than before. It does it all in restoring, in a way, I suppose. But I feel so often that it's all so futile – only shoulder that have dirty brasses, or no brasses at all – only shoulder on officer wear shorts on church, or be able on parade. only shoulder 1 holster to shoot, & tap & notice every little thing. It's no life, really – but I will tell you some more about it in them in my next letter or so. The whole thing boils down to being away from you, darling. The very first few times I saw you, I knew more each time that we were meant to be together – that has proved to be right – & it's growing more & more right, the longer I am here away from you. It's 1.0 o'clock again. All my love kisses hugs & embraces & everything that is all of me – always – darling dearest. Ian. xx

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